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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000652

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2038
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [BA](#)
SUBJECT: BAHRAIN'S KING RECEIVES KHALID MISHA?AL

REF: A. STATE 98683 (NOTAL), B. MANAMA 625 (NOTAL), C. 07 MANAMA 106

Classified by CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[11](#). (C) Summary: Bahrain's King met with Khalid Misha'al despite the USG's concerns. Sunni Islamists who constitute a majority in the elected lower house of parliament had lobbied for an official welcome for Misha'al. End summary.

[12](#). (SBU) An MFA contact told CDA that following ref B demarche September 17, Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa briefed King Hamad about the USG's deep concern with the planned first official visit to Bahrain of Hamas political bureau chief Khalid Misha'al.

[13](#). (U) Nevertheless, King Hamad received Misha'al at Safriya palace late on September 19. The official Bahrain News Agency released a statement on the King's meeting with Misha'al that included royal remarks praising the Palestinian cause and Palestinian reconciliation, but no comments on Hamas itself.

Readout on FM's Meeting with Misha'al

[14](#). (C) FM Shaikh Khalid also received Misha'al separately at the MFA. MFA Undersecretary Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa told CDA that Misha'al complained to the FM about GCC financial and political support for Fatah. The FM reportedly replied that the GCC states want rapprochement between Hamas and Fatah, and want Hamas to break free of its dependence on Iran and Syria, which was not helpful to the Palestinian cause. Misha'al retorted that PA President Mahmoud Abbas was dependent on the U.S. and Israel, and had nothing to show for it.

[15](#). (C) The FM told Misha'al that Bahrain supports a national unity conference between Hamas and Fatah, perhaps along lines being proposed by Arab League SecGen Amre Mousa. The FM discussed a "roundtable" that would include Arab League governments and the two Palestinian factions. Misha'al commented that Mahmoud Abbas was not serious about national unity.

Other Meetings

[16](#). (U) Misha'al met at parliament with lower house speaker Khalifa Al-Dhahrani, who is close to the Sunni Islamists in parliament. The Hamas leader also visited the Ramadan majlis of Abdulaziz Jalal Al-Meer, a Muslim Brotherhood politician. The Muslim Brothers and another Sunni Islamist party, Asala, between them hold a majority of the seats in Bahrain's elected lower house of parliament.

Comment

[17](#). (C) As noted ref B, Nasser al-Fadallah, a Muslim Brotherhood member of parliament, was a leading advocate for Misha'al's visit. It was Fadallah who last October publicly called on Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid to "wash his hands seven times" after shaking hands with Israeli FM Tzipi Livni on the margins of the 2007 UNGA (ref C). Shaikh Khalid departed for this year's UNGA shortly after meeting with

Misha'al. The GOB's decision to proceed with Misha'al's visit was probably driven at least in part by a desire to appease the Sunni Islamist majority in parliament.

Henzel